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ABSTRACT

To discover what effects the political, religious, social, and economic climate had on naming children, 100 families (representing almost 700 individuals) were interviewed to identify patterns in first names given over three generations. The sample of 100 families includes people from different religious backgrounds and from different parts of Latvia. Native speakers conducted the interviews. Data were analyzed by time period, religious background, linguistic origin of the name, and the name's origin, meaning, and significance. Results indicate that during the Soviet occupation, significantly more names defined as Latvian were chosen. This is interpreted as a demonstration of Latvian patriotism during this troubling period. Appended are male and female names by time period. (Author/MSE)

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Latvian Naming Patterns, 1880-1991

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Latvian Naming Patterns, 1880-1991

Abstract

To find out what effects the political, religious, social, and economic climate had on naming children, 100 families (involving almost 700 individuals) were interviewed to identify the patterns of giving first names over three generations. The sample of 100 families includes people from different religious backgrounds and from different parts of Latvia. Native speakers did the interviews. The data were analyzed in terms of time periods, religious background, language origin of the name, and the origin, meaning, and significance of the name. Results show that during the Soviet occupation significantly more names defined as "Latvian" were chosen. This is interpreted as a demonstration of Latvian patriotism during this troubling period.

Naming patterns of Latvians 1880-1991

Latvia is the middlemost of the three countries on the Baltic Sea between Poland and Russia. The changes in Latvia following the breakup of the Soviet Union have made it possible for investigators to evaluate onomastic aspects of personal names. While there has been some work done in Latvia on personal names, most of it, unfortunately, has not been easily available to Western scholars. This investigation is directed at the evaluation of Latvian naming patterns over five time periods.

Latvia has seen a great deal of change in the past 100 years. Before 1918, the Russian Czars ruled Latvia. It declared its independence in 1918 and remained independent until 1939. In 1940, Soviet Russia took over Latvia. Then, in July 1940, the Germans invaded. The Soviets retook Latvia in 1945 and ruled until 1990. Latvia again declared its independence in 1991.

The basic questions to which this investigation is addressed are:

1. The changes in naming patterns over these periods.
2. The religious factors associated with these changes.

Procedure

To study naming over time, we looked at patterns of naming over three generations. Interviewers obtained the data on home visits. They spoke with key family members and obtained basic information about the names of family members, especially how these names were given.

A questionnaire similar to the one used by Lawson and Glushkovskaya (1994) was prepared. The items gathered information for each family member on first names, the

reason(s) for selecting the names, their meaning, nicknames, the language(s) spoken at home, birth year, community or region where born, occupation, religion, level of religious observance, and ethnic identity.

Results

The 100 families totaled 685 individuals. We omitted 45 men and women who: (1) declared themselves ethnic Russians, (2) spoke Russian as their primary language at home or, (3) had clearly Russian given names and surnames. Table 1 shows the composition of the sample.

Please insert Table 1 about here

Time Periods

Preliminary examination of the data made it apparent that analysis of the data should be broken down into five time periods: (1) under Czarist rule (before 1918), (2) Independence 1 (1918-1939), (3) Russian and German Occupation (1940-1944), (4) Russian Occupation (1944-1990), and (5) Independence 2 (1991-). Table 2 shows the breakdown by sex.

Please insert Table 2 about here

Religious Backgrounds of the Sample

Historically, Latvia has been a religious country. The two largest groups have been Roman Catholic and Lutheran and we could expect that these two religious traditions play or played a role in the naming of children. Table 3 shows the data on the two major religious affiliations. For Catholic men, the decline in religious affiliation since World War I is significant. There is a decline also for Catholic women but not at a statistically significant level. However, when we combine both sexes, the decline is at a very high level ($<.001$) as Table 3 shows. The drop in Lutheran affiliation, while there, is not quite so strong but still shows the same trend. The None or Blank group shows a somewhat reverse pattern. That group showed increases over the same periods.

Please insert Table 3 about here

Major Sources of Names

Table 4 shows the leading language sources from which the names of our sample were drawn. This shows the major language and religious backgrounds. Table 5 displays frequencies by time period for the major sources. Latvian is clearly the primary source of names for both men and women, followed by Scandinavian, then by combined Bible, Church Calendar, or Hebrew sources. German is the final category shown. The trends in frequencies or percentages over the time periods need examination.

Please insert Tables 4 and 5 about here

Latvian

In categorizing names as Latvian we defined as "Latvian": (1) those names that were clearly identified with the Latvian language, (2) names of non-Latvian origin or possible non-Latvian origin but through usage and Latvian-type forms are identified by Latvians as Latvian. For example, Uğis probably comes from the Old German *hugu* which, in turn, is derived from the Latin Hugo. However, Uğis is identified as Latvian because it is the name of a hero in the drama *Indulis un Ārija* by Jānis Rainis. This very popular play, set in the 14th century, shows the fighting against the German Teutonic Order that occupied Latvia. The Appendix shows the names identified in our investigation with their derivations, meaning, and frequencies in the time periods.

Preliminary examination of the data on Latvian names in Table 5 does show a clearly increasing trend for males over the time periods. For women, the trend seems mixed and may be misleading. Therefore, we decided to drop out the data for the two short periods for which we had little data. These were Period 3, Russian-German Occupation, 1940-1944, and Period 5, Independence 2, 1991-1992. When we examine these data with a Chi Square analysis, we can see an increase of Latvian names under Russian occupation. It is clearly significant for both men and women. Figure 1 shows these results.

Please insert Figure 1 about here

Other Languages

The results, again using the three main periods, also show a decline in Scandinavian

and German sources, especially so for males. On the religious names, the results are somewhat contradictory. Men show an increase (though not significant); women show a significant decrease in religious names.

Discussion

Our data have several possible implications that can be discussed. We have decided to focus on one of these--the rise of patriotic Latvian names during the period of Soviet Communist rule. This rise is remarkable. What happened? The Russians suppressed religious, cultural, and ethnic identity. We saw the decline in religious affiliation in Table 3. Latvia began to be russified.

Our observation is that there were few ways that patriotic Latvians could affirm and show their ethnic identity. One of these was to choose names for their children that would demonstrate patriotism. What Latvians did have was a cultural identity and an awareness of their history. While soap opera television characters play a major factor in the naming of children in the US today (and previously it was movies and movie stars and before that, literature), television hardly played such a role in Latvia in the period 1946-1990. Instead, what we see in our data is the influence of a patriotic writer such as Jānis Rainis who recalled the heroic stories of Latvia's history. This influence showed up with frequency of Latvian names as we have shown in the Appendices and in Table 5.

Perhaps a similar patriotic influence can be shown in the work of Finnish patriots such as Elias Lönnrot who wrote and Jean Sibelius who composed music about the legends of the Kalevalá. Finland was also under Russian. We do not know whether naming patterns of the time were influenced but we do know these two creative artists had a powerful

influence on Finnish patriotism.

Lawson and Glushkovskaya (1994) also showed how the use of names can affirm ethnic identity. Their investigation dealt with Jews in the Leningrad and Moscow areas as contrasted with Jews in the Central Asian Republics. The results show that the Jews in the Leningrad-Moscow area (where the Soviets repressed all religion) tended to maintain their traditional naming practices (naming a child after a deceased relative). This was in marked contrast to the practices of the Jews from Central Asia who lived at a great distance from Moscow and in a Muslim-dominated area. These Asian Jews had far more religious freedom. However, they tended to decrease the traditional naming practices. Further investigations are underway in Lithuania and Estonia. It will be interesting to see whether they, too, display a rise in patriotic names during the Soviet Occupation. Thus, we can conclude from this investigation that naming children can represent a demonstration of political and ethnic identity even under repression.

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Appendix A: Male Names

Name	Time Periods -17	18-39	40-44	45-90	91-	Tot
Agris < *agrs* "early."				1		1
Aigars Origin uncertain.				4		4
Airis < *airis* "oar, paddle."		1				1
Aldis NN < Lith. *Aldonis*.				5		5
Aldonis < Lith.			1			1
Alvis < Old Germ. *al* + *wīsi* "all-wise."				1		1
Ansis NN < *Andrejs* < Gr. *Andreas* "manly."		1				1
Dainis < *daina* "song."				2		2
Didzis NN < *DĪtrihs* < orig. from Old Germ. *diot* 'people' + *rīchi* 'mighty.' Name of the main character in *Pūt vējiņi* by Rainis.				1		1
Dzintars < *dzintars* "amber."				3		3
Fricis NN < *Fridrihs* < Old Germ. *fridu* 'peaceful' + rīchi 'ruler' = "peaceful ruler."	1					1
Gints < *Gintars* < Lith.? Name assoc. with the main character in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*.				3		3
Girts NN < Old Germ. *Gerhardt* < *gēr* 'spear' + *hart* 'brave' = "spear-brave."				1		1
Guntis < *guns, uguns* "fire"		1				1
Gunvaldis < *guns* 'fire' + *valdis* 'ruler' = "ruler of fire."				1		1
Ilgmārs "Ilga+ Māris." **Meaning?**				1		1
Ilmārs < Finno-Ugric *ilma* '_?__' or Old Germ. *hiltja* 'struggle, fight' + *māri* 'famous' = "famous struggle".		2				2
Imants < Livonian *im* 'miracle' + *and* 'present.' Livonian legendary hero.		1		3		4
Inārs masc. form of Ināra < *Ina* or *Inese* < Gr. *agnos* "pure, chaste." Also, St. Agnes.				1		1

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Appendix A: Male Names (Continued)

Name	Time Periods -17	18-39	40-44	45-90	91-	Tot
Indulis < *Indriķis* < *Heinrihs* < Germ. *Heinrich heim* + *richi'* = "home ruler." Well-known hero of drama *Indulis un Ārija* by Rainis.			1			1
Ints < *Indriķis*. See above.				2		2
Jānis Latv. orig. < Lith. *Jonas*, meaning uncertain. Later assoc. w. *Johaness*, St. John.	12	12	4	11		39
Kristaps < *Kristofors* < Gr. *Christos* + *pherō* "one who carries Christ in his heart." Legendary 15th century Latvian hero who carried a baby over the Daugava River in Riga.				1		1
Laimonis < *Laima* "the fortunate one." Also, the pre-Christian Goddess of Fate.	1	3		2		6
Nauris < Persian *nau,nū* 'new' + *rūz* 'day.' Hero of Latvian film *Nauris*.				1		1
Ojārs < dial. *ojars* "madcap, dare devil"		1	1	1		3
Raitis < *Raita* < *raits* "deft, clever, fast, swift."				3		3
Uģis < Old Germ. *hugu* "heart, mind, spirit." One of the main heroes of the drama *Indulis un Ārija* by Rainis.				2		2
Uldis NN < Old Germ. *Ulrichs, (uodal* 'fortune' + 'power.'		1				1
Valdis < *valdīt* "to rule" > "ruler"		2		2	1	5
Viesturs < *viesturis* "hospitable."				4	1	5
Vilnis < *vilnis* "wave"		2	2	1		5
Visvaldis < *viss* + *valdīt* "ruler of all"		1				1
Ziedonis < *ziedonis* "springtime, blossoming season, flowering"	1			1		2
Zintis < Zinta < zinte "sorcery, witchcraft, seer."				1		1

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Appendix B: Female Names

Name	Time Periods -17	18-39	40-44	45-90	91-	Tot
Aiga fem. of Aigars< Finno-Ugric *aig* "pike."				1		1
Aija < *aijāt* "to lull to sleep."				2		2
Aina < *aina* "artistic landscape, view,"	3		1			4
Aja: See Aija above.				1		1
Anita dim. form < Anna < Heb. Chana "grace."			1	2		3
Ausma < *ausma* "dawn."		2		1		3
Austra < *austra* "daybreak", "Goddess of the Morning", "morning star."	1	1				2
Baiba affect. form of Barbara < Gr. *barbara* 'foreign, beautiful.' The main character in *Pūt vējiņi* by Rainis.					1	1
Dace affect. form < *Dārta* < Dorotheja < Gr. *dōron + theos* "gift of God."				6		6
Daina < *daina* "song."		1		1		2
Dita < Danish or Old German *diot* "people."				1		1
Dzintra fem. form < *dzintars* "amber."				1		1
Gaida < *gaidīt* "to wait", "one who is in waiting."		2				2
Ginta fem. form < *Gints. Gintars* < *Lith.? dzintars* "amber." Name associated with the main character in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt.*			2		2	
Guna < *guns, uguns* "fire."			1			1
Gunta < fem. form of *Guntis* "fire" or NN < *gundega* "buttercup."			1	1		2
Ilga < *ilgas* "longing, desire."		2		1		3
Iluta origin uncertain. May be a phonetic derivation.					1	1
Ina origin uncertain. May be a short form < *Ina* or *Inese*. See below.				1		1
Ināra < Ina?				1		1
Indra "river in Latgale district."				3		3
Inese < Agnese < Lat. Agnēs < Gr. *(h)agne* "chaste." St. Agnes.		1	1	1	7	10

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Appendix B: Female Names (Continued)

Name	Time Periods -17	18-39	40-44	45-90	91-	Tot
Inta < *Ints* < *Indriķis* < *Heinrihs* "home ruler."				4		4
Lelde "symb. light." Character in a play by Rainis.				2		2
Līga < *līgot* "song." Esp. songs during the Līgo festival (June 23).				1		1
Ligita < *līgot*." See above.			1	2		3
Madara < *madara* "flower of the madder family."				1		1
Māra. Before Christianity, Latvia had its own deities. Māra was the Mother Earth Goddess. The name was probably linked later to the Christian Mary.			2	1		3
Mirdza < *mirdzēt* "to shine, to sparkle."			3			3
Mudīte < *mudīgs* "busy, fast, swift."				1		1
Rasma < *rasma* "harvest, success."	1	2				3
Rozīte < *roze* "rose."		1				1
Rudīte < *ruds* "red-haired, rusty-haired."			1			1
Sarmīte < *Sarma* < *sarma* "hoar-frost"				3		3
Skaidrīte < *Skaidra* < *skaidrs* "clear."	2	2		1		5
Vaira < *vairot* "to increase, to multiply."		1	1			2
Valda fem. form of *Valdis* < *valdīt* "to rule, to govern."		1		1		2
Velta < *velte* "gift, present."		6	1			7
Vēsma < *vēsma* "breeze."			1			1
Vija < *vija* "garland, wreath."	1	2	1	2		6
Vizma < *vizmot* "to radiate. glitter."				1		1
Zaiga < *zaigot* "to shine, to glitter."				1	1	1
Zane dim. < Latin *Zuzanna* < Hebr. Shoshana [Susanna] "lily." Also the name of a well-known character in Pūt vējiņi by Rainis.				4	1	5

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Author Note

Appreciation is expressed to Jānis Saulitis who helped at several stages of this research.

Table 1. Composition of the sample.

	Men	Women	Total
Original Total	332	353	685
Non-Latvians	18	27	45
Net Total	314	326	640

Table 2. Time Periods.

	Men	Women	Total
1. Czarist Period, 1880-1917	60	43	103
2. Independence, 1918-1939	88	91	179
3. Russian and German Occupation, 1940-1944	20	28	48
4. Russian Occupation, 1945-1990	141	155	296
5. Independence, 1991-1992	5	9	14
Totals	314	326	640

Table 3. Religious affiliations of respondents by time periods.

	Catholic			Lutheran			None or Blank		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
1. Czarist	14	10	24	27	21	48	3	4	7
	23.3%*	23.3%	23.3%	45%	48.8%	46.7%	5%	9.3%	5.6%
2. Independence 1	9	12	21	33	49	82	6	4	10
	10.2%	13.2%	11.7%	37.5%	53.9%	45.8%	6.8%	4.4%	5.6%
3. Russ-Germ Occ.**	-	3	3	8	13	21	-	-	-
		10.7%	6.3%	40%	46.4%	43.4%	-	-	-
4. Russian Occ.	8	13	19	43	42	85	31	38	69
	4.2%	8.4%	6.4%	30.5%	8.4%	28.7%	22%	24.5%	23.3%
5. Independence. 2**	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	9	14
							100%	100%	100%

χ^2 1 X 2 X 4 (2 df)

Men	16.975 < .001	8.542 < .02	9.898 < .01
Women	4.083 NS	2.723 NS*	3.300 NS
Men & Women	22.231 < .001	12.353 < .01	12.839 < .01

*Note: The percentages referred to in this and subsequent tables refer to percentages in the whole group evaluated. Thus, there were 60 males in the Group 1, Czarist Period. Of these 14 or 23.3% were Catholics.

**Note: The two periods, Russian and German Occupation (1940-1944) and Independence 2, had so few cases that the totals are really meaningful. They were left out of the statistical analysis. The entries shown are only to provide continuity.

Table 4. Major sources of names.

Source	Men	Women	Total
Latvian (*Vilnis, Skaidrīte*)	112	111	223
Scandinavian (*Ēriks, Helga*)	39	61	100
Bible/Hebrew (*Ādams, Anna*)	38	51	89
German (*Kārlis, Berta*)	36	21	57
Church Calendar(*Antons, Agnis*)	23	28	51
Greek (*Pēteris, Diāna*)	17	26	43
Latin (*Jūlijs, Vera*)	17	26	43

Note: While names such as Antons and Agnis have Greek or Latin roots, we have considered that their main association is with the Church Calendar.

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Table 5. Frequencies and percentages of leading language sources.

	Latvian			Scandinavian			German		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
1. Czarist	15	6	21	11	-	11	13	6	19
	25%	14%	20.4%	18.3%	-	10.7%	21.7%	14%	18.4%
2. Indep. 1	29	30	59	15	9	24	12	5	17
	33%	33%	33%	17%	9.8%	13.4%	13.6%	5.5%	9.4%
3. Russ-Germ Occ.	8	13	21	3	6	9	2	-	2
	40%	46.4%	43.8%	15%	21.4%	18.75%	10%	-	4.1%
4. Russian Occ.	58	59	117	9	7	16	9	10	19
	41.1%	38.1%	39.6%	6.4%	4.5%	5.4%	6.4%	6.5%	6.8%
5. Indep. 2	2	3	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
	40%	33.3%	35.8%	-	-	-	-	-	-

χ^2 1 X 2 X 4 (2 df)			
Men	5.101 < .05	8.542 < .02	9.898 < .01
Women	8.869 < .02	2.723 NS*	3.300 NS
Men & Women	12.603 < .01	12.353 < .01	12.839 < .01

***Note: The two periods, Russian and German Occupation (1940-1944) and Independence 2, had so few cases that the totals are really meaningful. They were left out of the statistical analysis. The entries shown are only to provide continuity.**

****Since there was a zero frequency for Scandinavian women in the Czarist period, χ^2 analysis was used only for two periods, Independence 1 and Russian & German Occupation.**

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Table 5. (Continued). Frequencies and percentages of leading language sources.

	Bible/Church Calendar/Hebrew		
	Men	Women	Total
1. Czarist	8	16	23
	13.3%	37.2%	19%
2. Indep. 1	14	26	40
	15.9%	28.6%	22.3%
3. Russ-Germ Occ.	3	5	8
	15%	17.9%	16.9%
4. Russian Occ.	34	28	62
	24.1%	18.1%	20.9%
5. Indep. 2	3	4	7
	60%	44.4%	50%

χ^2 1 X 2 X 4 (2 df)

Men	4.105 NS
Women	8.091 < .02
Men & Women	0.166 NS

Figure 1. Percentages of Latvian Names before and after Soviet Occupation.